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# ACLS

## NEWSLETTER

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A REPORT ON THE CONFERENCES OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TEACHER EDUCATION AND  
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

1958 - 1960

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During the past three years the ACLS has served as one of the co-sponsors of the annual national conferences of the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards (TEPS). These conferences were designed to bring together representatives of all types of schools and all levels of education to discuss the philosophy, content, and standards of teacher preparation, in the hope that general agreement might be reached on ways to improve teacher education.

Considering the widely divergent opinions and sense of distrust which had long existed between the two major segments of the educational world, it was admittedly a gamble to introduce humanists, scientists, and social scientists into an annual conference of professional educators and hope to achieve any semblance of unity. There had already been isolated examples of cooperative effort on college campuses, however, and it was believed, if this could be extended to a national scale, that state and local authorities might be encouraged to initiate needed revisions in the preparation of elementary and secondary school teachers.

The ACLS has now compiled the comments it has received from scholars in the humanities and social sciences who participated in one or more of these

conferences, and this report attempts to summarize their reactions and to analyze their estimates of the results achieved.

The first conference, at Bowling Green, Ohio, in 1958, was a surprisingly effective beginning. Many of the scholars had gone expecting to be overwhelmed by sheer numbers and believing that little could be accomplished under such circumstances. Most came away deeply impressed by the experience. They found their opposite numbers not only willing to listen to their views but also genuinely interested in uniting to work out joint recommendations. This, indeed, was the most significant result of the conference, for it demonstrated that a frank exchange of ideas could allay hostilities, even though concrete agreement on specific issues might be difficult to reach.

The Bowling Green conference was not intended to probe very deeply into the issues that might divide academicians and professional educators. It was rather an occasion to explore the extent to which they shared similar goals and philosophies of education and, once it became apparent that each side was prepared to join in this effort, considerable mutual understanding and respect developed.

This does not mean that all were in accord on the meaning and results of the conference. There were some lingering suspicions about the ease with which compromises were made and some doubts about whether there was a great deal of substance to the agreements reached, considering the terminology in which certain resolutions were couched. Nevertheless, most of the liberal arts people were encouraged to learn that professional educators not only viewed the intellectual development of the child as the primary concern of the schools but also seemed prepared, as an earnest of this conviction, to give subject-matter specialists a strong voice in all phases of teacher education.

Some scholars, in their new-found enthusiasm, immediately reported these views to their deans in the hope of swift and concrete action, but those with more experience in such affairs cautioned against such optimism; a big job was yet to be done in changing basic attitudes on the part of a great many people at all levels of education. All agreed, however, that a breakthrough had apparently been effected in the "eternal dichotomy." Large numbers of people, who had never heard any views other than their own discussed at the annual meetings of their professional associations, had been exposed to new ideas at Bowling Green. The barriers to mutual understanding had been lowered, and the atmosphere appeared conducive to consider the following year what should constitute the subject-matter preparation of prospective teachers.

The conference at Lawrence, Kansas, in 1959, provided this opportunity. It was intended as a practical implementation of the previous year's more generalized and theoretical approach, with the content of teacher education as the subject of discussion. This was a more professional meeting than the first one, and more moderated in tone, and the participants found the atmosphere conducive to solid work on the hard issues confronting them. The agreements of 1958 remained reasonably intact, so that little time was spent in rehashing old

issues. The discussions, as a result, generated less heat and more light than had those of the previous year.

This did not mean that accord was easily reached. Indeed, subject-matter specialists and professors of education were little inclined to yield to each other where differences of opinion existed on specific items in the curriculum. It did not take long, however, for both groups to subscribe to the general proposition that the initial requirement for a teacher should be high intellectual attainment and that proficiency in one's subject matter was absolutely necessary. The scholars were then willing to concede that the intangible factors of personality, drive, and desire to teach were essential, and that some professional education courses were desirable. Considerable support was also given to the demand that all prospective school teachers, whether elementary or secondary, should have the equivalent of a liberal arts degree with a strong academic major.

When, however, discussion turned to just what the term "general education" meant, what should be included in methods courses, and how to measure qualitatively the preparation required in English and foreign languages, the two sides could do little more than agree to disagree. As a result, the most that could be done was to establish a ceiling on professional preparation and a floor under academic preparation—each stated in terms of hours of credit.

The liberal arts professors left this conference with mixed feelings. The ease with which agreements had been reached on general principles and theories, combined with the reluctance to make concessions on specific issues, led a good many of them to reserve judgment until they saw how the new agreements were going to be implemented. Several of those who had returned from the 1958 conference prepared to work closely with their own education faculties found little indication that Bowling Green had had any impact at the college level. Others reported the same type of situation prevailing at regional and state TEPS meetings, and they wondered what steps were being taken below the national level to insure academic participation in teacher education. TEPS officials and co-sponsoring organizations, therefore, joined to urge directors of state and regional meetings to broaden their base of participation, for it was evident that the success of the national TEPS conferences would depend upon the extent to which recommendations were translated into action at the working level.

Some of the liberal arts professors who had been at Lawrence, on the other hand, doubted the wisdom of pressing for action on the basis of agreements reached at the second conference. They did not believe that enough had been accomplished on the question of curriculum to move on, as had been planned, to a discussion of certification in 1960. There was an uneasy feeling that setting curricular patterns in quantitative terms, as had been done at Lawrence, rather than in qualitative terms, was artificial and meaningless. The conviction existed, in other words, that real agreement on the importance of intellectual standards must precede a discussion of certification requirements. This was, of course, a measure of the scholars' sincere intention that the TEPS con-

ferences should achieve concrete results, and the Steering Committee took the matter under advisement. It was reluctantly decided, however, that the proposed change was inadvisable, and that the third and final conference must deal with certification as scheduled.

This decision, in retrospect, appears to have been a mistake. Whereas the majority of liberal arts people had been enthusiastic about the first conference and were cautiously optimistic about the second, a good many left San Diego in 1960 with more than a little sense of frustration. Suggestions that there might be more than one acceptable method of certification, or that it might be possible to issue certificates to people well prepared in subject-matter areas but lacking in required professional courses, frequently met vocal opposition. This was often interpreted to mean that educators by and large consider it less damaging to have teachers unprepared in academic fields than in the professional aspects of their training. This construction might well have been avoided had a firm agreement been reached on the importance of intellectual standards before licensure requirements were discussed.

Certification is a difficult and complex process, and the scholars went to the third conference prepared to listen and learn. Generally, however, they report that the learning was primarily on their side, that the outcome of the debate sometimes seemed to have been settled before the conference opened, and that at least some of the educators appeared to be in a mood to nullify the concessions that had been made in 1958 and 1959.

It would be entirely incorrect to suggest, however, that all of the liberal arts professors viewed the results of the conference in such a discouraging light. Many were encouraged by the fact that the more rigid, and generally the most vocal, of the educators did not reflect the views of the profession as a whole. Classroom teachers, for example, seemed to be much more inclined to approve strong subject-matter programs and to insist upon endorsed certificates than were the superintendents and principals who are trapped in the mesh of the current teacher shortage. Professors of education and state certification officers likewise, in public or in private, indicated that they would like to see a certification system which would prevent teachers from giving courses in which they were not fully qualified. For this reason alone, a number of scholars, who were otherwise disappointed with the immediate results at San Diego, believed that something positive had been accomplished. Their very presence had furnished support for those who had previously felt inhibited about expressing their convictions.

The impressions the individual scholars took away with them from San Diego were in large part dependent upon the particular groups to which they were assigned. In one or two cases they felt themselves regarded as interlopers whose ideas were unwelcome. Others believed they had at least achieved negative results by acting as a brake on the extremists. In several groups, however, there was a good deal of sentiment in favor of giving liberal arts representatives a voice in the establishment of certification standards.

Unfortunately, a good many of the ACLS delegates who attended all three conferences are not as prepared to believe as they once were that such general recommendations will ever be translated into action. They have noted little change in attitude in their own departments of education or in state TEPS meetings, and they feel that San Diego failed to provide the impetus necessary to bring action on the local level. Moreover, the New Horizons Report issued by the TEPS Commission the week after the San Diego conference proved to be disheartening to every scholar who hoped for positive results from these conferences.

Several months earlier the National TEPS Commission had started work on a new set of recommendations for teacher certification, under the title "New Horizons in Teacher Education and Professional Standards." The ACLS representative on the Steering Committee for the TEPS conferences urged that the preliminary report of this project be released in full at San Diego, because he felt it would make an excellent working paper, serve as a good focus of discussion, and encourage a frank exchange of ideas. This suggestion was rejected on the ground that it might lead the participants at San Diego to believe the TEPS Commission had already determined its position on certification, thus leaving the San Diego conference no useful purpose to serve. Instead, the report was issued a week later at the annual meeting of the National Education Association in Los Angeles, without any modifications having been made as a result of the discussions at San Diego. Indeed, by recommending licensure for everyone in education, including private school teachers and college professors, the New Horizons Committee gave support to an idea that had not even been discussed at San Diego.

Not unnaturally the liberal arts professors were shocked by this turn of affairs. Both the timing and the substance of the report led many to believe that the TEPS Commission was deliberately disregarding the findings of its own conference.

For this reason, and in the interest of continued cooperation on the part of the academic community, it should be made clear that the National TEPS Commission did not regard the New Horizons Report as final when it was presented at Los Angeles, and it is still in the process of revision. Those who have read the preliminary report with care will know that it supports a good many of the proposals made by the liberal arts people at San Diego, and many of the revisions now being made are reflections of the scholars' points of view. Moreover, it appears that the recommendation for licensing college professors will be deleted before the report becomes final. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the academic community will reserve judgment for the time being. If, when the final report is issued, it shows that the liberal arts people have helped the TEPS Commission to define its problems and suggest sound solutions, something important will have been accomplished. A more serious problem as far as the results of the TEPS conferences are concerned will be how to extend the gains to the working levels of education.

In order to assess these conferences, the ACLS provided financial support to a number of scholars who had attended Bowling Green and Lawrence, thus enabling them to participate at San Diego. The over-all impression to be gained from their reports is one of valuable, but diminishing, returns. One or two, to be sure, found the two groups to be tragically fragmented and thus unable to perform the tasks set before them. Yet, despite disappointment with the results at San Diego, the majority felt that barriers to cooperation had been lowered among the participants at least, and that the next step for the scholars was to work through their learned societies to achieve concrete results at the local level. Large national conferences may be able to discuss general ideas, but the associations of subject-matter disciplines must take up the task of improving the program of teacher education. The overwhelming majority of the reports stressed this point. By establishing criteria for teacher training programs, by insisting on representation in accrediting agencies and on certification boards, and by establishing committees to work out model curricula for teacher education, the learned societies can exert great influence at all levels.

The scholars realize that the leaders in teacher education must be convinced and converted before anything can be accomplished, but they believe that the classroom teachers, if given sound texts and programs, and adequate support, can do much to effect this conversion. The TEPS officials, by inviting liberal arts representatives to this series of conferences, and by giving them a fair opportunity to express their views, performed a service which the professional associations of the academic disciplines cannot ignore.

#### SUMMER SEMINAR IN NUMISMATICS

The American Numismatic Society held its ninth Summer Seminar in Numismatics at the Society's Museum in New York from June 14 to August 20, 1960.

Ten students, representing six universities, attended. Their fields of study are classics, history of art, and mediaeval history.

The use of numismatics as a necessary auxiliary to research in history and other broad fields of study provided the theme of the Seminar. The program included background reading on coins, attendance at sixteen conferences conducted by specialists in selected fields, and preparation by each student of a paper on a topic of his own selection. The conferences were chiefly concerned with specific problems relating to ancient and mediaeval history and art, toward the solution of which the science of numismatics makes definite contribution. During the closing week of the Seminar each student conducted a conference on his selected topic.

The seminar will be repeated in the summer of 1961, and the Society will again offer grants-in-aid to students who, by June 1961, will have completed at least one year's graduate study in archaeology, classics, economics, history, history of art, oriental languages, or some other humanistic field. It is ex-

pected that at least two visiting foreign scholars will be present. The offer is restricted to graduate students and junior instructors at universities in the United States and Canada. Further information and application forms may be obtained from the offices of the Society, Broadway between 155th and 156th Streets, New York 32, New York. Completed applications for the grants must be filed by March 1, 1961.

#### GERMANIC STUDIES IN THE U. S.

(*Editor's note:* Following the publication of the report of the ACLS Conference on Scholarly Research in the May 1960 issue of the *Newsletter*, a Germanist, who noted that his field of study had not been covered, provided the following statement at the request of officers of the Council.)

The traditional concentration on one segment of German culture, literature, will be progressively abandoned by departments of Germanic languages. German literature of the present no longer reflects German culture completely, as it may have in the day of Goethe. Moreover, the leading German minds and the greatest influence of German culture in this century have been in other areas, as may be illustrated by listing the names of Freud, Planck, Jaspers. Kierkegaard and Bohr may be cited to indicate the same situation in the Scandinavian area. Specialists in Germanic languages will accordingly have to undertake to interpret the contributions of all facets of Germanic culture, particularly for American intellectual life. Such undertakings will outweigh in importance the housekeeping chores of the profession, production of adequate editions, interpretations of texts, solutions of individual difficulties. In dealing with the Germanic languages, linguists will set out to describe them in accordance with the findings of modern linguistics. No adequate grammar of German or of the other Germanic languages has been produced. Since at present many of the European linguists are still viewing their languages through a Latin lens, in spite of the difficulties produced by distance, it may fall to linguists in America to produce adequate grammars. In the course of their production, contributions will be made to the understanding of difficult texts, especially those in literature, to the teaching of the Germanic languages, and to their history and the interpretation of changes they have undergone.



## THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

The American Council of Learned Societies is a private non-profit federation of thirty national scholarly organizations concerned with the humanities and the humanistic aspects of the social sciences.

The object of the American Council of Learned Societies, as set forth in its constitution, is "the advancement of humanistic studies in all fields of learning and the maintenance and strengthening of relations among the national societies devoted to such studies."

The Council was organized in 1919 and incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1924. Its principal support comes from the philanthropic foundations, supplemented, on occasion, by government contracts for specific enterprises.

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